

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 INR-10 L-03 ACDA-12
NSAE-00 PA-02 SS-15 SP-02 USIA-15 TRSE-00 H-02
NSC-05 EB-08 OMB-01 DOE-11 SOE-02 OES-07 CEQ-01
NRC-07 /121 W

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R 141922Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4143
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
USMISSION USNATO
USNMR SHAPE
USCINCEUR
USDOCOSOUTH
CINCUSAREUR
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCUSAFE

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E. O. NA
TAGS: UK MPOL NATO
SUBJECT: DEBATE ON DEFENSE WHITE PAPER
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SUMMARY: THE FIRST DAY OF A TWO-DAY DEBATE ON THE
DEFENSE WHITE PAPER TOOK PLACE ON 13 MARCH. FOR THE
GOVERNMENT MULLEY MOVED: THAT THIS HOUSE ENDORSES HER
MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT'S POLICY SET OUT IN THE STATEMENT
ON THE DEFENSE ESTIMATES 1978, OF BASING BRITISH
SECURITY ON COLLECTIVE EFFORT TO DETER AGGRESSION,

WHILE SEEKING EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE TENSION THROUGH INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS ON ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT. FOR THE OPPOSITION, SIR IAN GILMOUR (SHADOW CABINET SPOKESMAN ON DEFENSE) MOVED AN AMENDMENT TO MAKE THE MAIN MOTION READ: THAT THIS HOUSE REGRETS THAT THE DEFENSE POLICY OF HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT DURING THE LAST FOUR YEARS HAS DAMAGED THE SECURITY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND HAS HARMED THE PROSPECTS OF REACHING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ON ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT. ANOTHER SIGNED BY 75 MPS--MOSTLY TRIBUNITES AND LEFT-WINGERS--CALLED ON THE HOUSE TO CONDEMN THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED 3- INCREASE IN DEFENSE SPENDING "WHICH WILL HEIGHTEN WORLD TENSION, DIVERT RESOURCES URGENTLY REQUIRED FOR SOCIAL NEEDS, AND CONTRAVENE HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT'S ELECTION PLEDGE TO REDUCE MILITARY EXPENDITURE..." THIS AMENDMENT, WHICH ALSO CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT NOT TO PROCEED WITH A NEW GENERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, WAS NOT CALLED BY THE SPEAKER AND HENCE WILL NOT BE PUT TO A VOTE. END SUMMARY.

1. MULLEY OPENED THE DEBATE BY FIRMLY REJECTING SUGGESTIONS FROM THE LEFT-WING OF THE LABOR PARTY THAT DEFENSE SPENDING BE CUT. RATHER, HE DECLARED BRITAIN WOULD, IN FACT, BE INCREASING ITS DEFENSE CONTRIBUTION IN REAL TERMS. IF THE SECURITY OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC UNCLASSIFIED

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ALLIANCE WAS TO BE MAINTAINED THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM THE NEED TO DEVOTE "ADDITIONAL RESOURCES" TO DEFENSE. THERE WERE NO CHEAP OPTIONS, MULLEY NOTED. THE WHITE PAPER REAFFIRMED THE UK'S DETERMINATION TO MAKE A FULL AND EFFECTIVE DEFENSE CONTRIBUTION TO NATO AS WELL AS TO SEEK, IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALLIES, REALISTIC MEASURES OF ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT BY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT.

2. MULLEY UNDERScoreD THE GROWING CAPABILITY OF THE WARSAW PACT FORCES WHICH WAS FORMIDABLE AND GROWING. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY HAD RECEIVED A GREAT DEAL OF ADVANCED NEW EQUIPMENT LATELY "WHICH GREATLY INCREASED THEIR OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY." BUT, MULLEY SAID, IN EUROPE THE RUSSIANS KNEW THEY FACED "A DETERMINED, UNITED AND COHESIVE WESTERN ALLIANCE. THEY UNDERSTOOD THAT WAR WOULD NOT BRING VICTORY TO THEM BUT DISASTER FOR ALL CONCERNED."

3. MULLEY CAME UNDER STRONG ATTACK FROM HIS LEFT-WING CRITICS WHO ASSERTED THAT THE ARMS RACE IS TAKING US TOWARDS A NUCLEAR WAR. THEY ACCUSED THE WEST OF BEING

"THE PACEMAKER" AND ATTACKED, SPECIFICALLY, THE INCREASE
IN THE UK'S DEFENSE SPENDING.

4. MULLEY WAS ALSO BITTERLY ATTACKED BY GILMOUR WHO
ACCUSED HIM OF "NEGLIGENT AND INDEFENSIBLE" BEHAVIOR
OVER THE ISSUE OF THE ARMED FORCES PAY. GILMOUR
ASSERTED THAT IN THE ARMED FORCES THERE IS AN
UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS OF MORALE AND UNPRECEDENTED LACK
OF CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT THE
FORCES MUST GET A SUBSTANTIAL RISE IN APRIL AND IF
THEY DID NOT GET ONE, THEN MULLEY "CANNOT RETAIN HIS

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OFFICE. HE WILL HAVE TO RESIGN." HOWEVER, DESPITE
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CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM THE OPPOSITION ON THE ISSUE
OF SERVICE PAY, MULLEY REFUSED TO ANTICIPATE THE
RECOMMENDATIONS DUE FROM THE ARMED SERVICES PAY REVIEW
BODY. HE INDICATED TO THE HOUSE THAT THE ARMED FORCES
WOULD STILL HAVE TO SETTLE WITHIN THE TEN PERCENT,
UNDERSCORING THE NEED FOR RESTRAINT "IF INFLATION IS TO
BE CONTROLLED AND THE ECONOMY IS TO BE RESTORED TO
HEALTH." ON THE OTHER HAND, MULLEY SAID HE WOULD DO
HIS "DAMNDEST TO SEE THAT THE FORCES GET A FAIR DEAL ON
PAY."

5. ON THE ER/RB WEAPON, MULLEY SAID IT DID NOT MAKE
SENSE "TO SINGLE OUT ONE NUCLEAR WEAPON PROPOSAL LIKE
THE NEUTRON BOMB FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION." HE SAID NO
DECISIONS HAD YET BEEN TAKEN. THE QUESTION WAS WHETHER
ENHANCED RADIATION WEAPONS WERE LIKELY TO IMPROVE
DETERRENCE AND WHAT IMPLICATIONS THEIR INTRODUCTION
MIGHT HAVE.

6. JULIAN CRITCHLEY (ALDERSHOT), WOUND UP FOR THE
OPPOSITION AT THE END OF THE FIRST DAY'S DEBATE,
CHARGING THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S DEFENSE POLICY WAS ONE
OF "HAZARDING THE SECURITY OF THE REALM THROUGH NEGLECT
AND IN SO DOING ALIENATING BRITAIN'S ALLIES AND LOSING
THE RESPECT THE COUNTRY ONCE ENJOYED." ROBERT BROWN,
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR THE ARMY, CLOSED FOR
THE GOVERNMENT, NOTING THAT BRITAIN'S DEFENSE CONTRI-
BUTION HAD BEEN BROUGHT "MORE INTO LINE WITH HER ALLIES.
BRITAIN HAD ACHIEVED AN EFFICIENT POSTURE AND FROM
THERE WOULD HAVE GREATER ROOM FOR MANEUVER BY CAREFULLY
SELECTED MEASURES TO MAKE QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENTS TO
THE FORCES..." HE SAID THE THREE PERCENT INCREASED
EXPENDITURE WOULD BE USEFUL, NOTING THAT THE NEED FOR
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"ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT" WOULD REMAIN BUT THE BETTER
ECONOMIC POSITION OF THE COUNTRY "WOULD ALLOW MORE

EMPHASIS TO BE PLACED ON IMPROVEMENTS TO, RATHER THAN
THE PRESERVATION OF, THE COUNTRY'S CAPABILITY."

6. THE SECOND DAY OF DEBATE TAKES PLACE ON 14 MARCH.

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